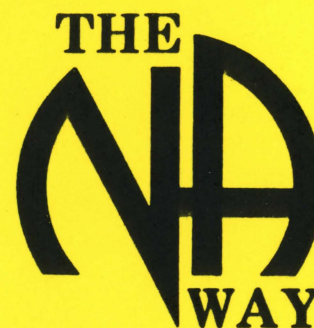


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**

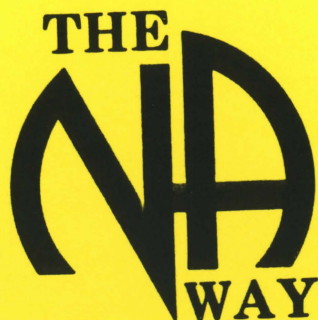


**MAY
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***F*INDING
*R*ECOVERY
*E*XCEPTIONALLY
*E*ASY
*D*URING
*O*PEN-MINDED
*M*OMENTS**



THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

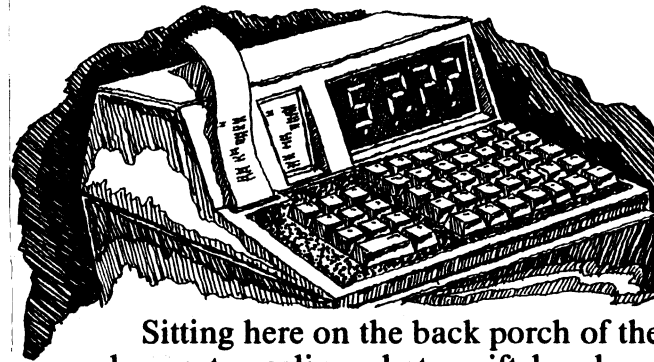
N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover. It costs nothing to be a member of N.A.—there are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that *they work*. For more information about the N.A. groups nearest you, write us at the address below.

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input, along with a signed copyright release form, to: The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

- 1 *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- 2 *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
- 3 *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
- 4 *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
- 5 *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
- 6 *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
- 7 *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
- 8 *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
- 9 *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
- 10 *We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
- 11 *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*
- 12 *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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What Price?

Sitting here on the back porch of the apartment I live in, I began to realize what a gift has been given to me. Before committing myself to the Program of Narcotics Anonymous, I had absolutely nothing. Well, nothing worthwhile anyway—nothing but years of degradation, shame, guilt, and most of all rage and fear. I had a record and a habit, and my life was just in shambles. My existence on this planet for thirty-two years generated one big goose egg.

I was introduced to the Program of Narcotics Anonymous exactly when God knew I'd be ready, not a minute too soon, not a minute too late. I was beaten up enough by my addiction that I was vulnerable and willing enough to listen. I'll admit there was some doubt because I had tried dozens of other ways before so I didn't really think this would work either. I really believed I was hopeless and destined for that life forever. That was five and a half years ago, by the grace of God.

Not until I believed that I could recover, was I to begin my recovery process. The more I hung around, the more I came to believe. I didn't have, nor do I have today, any reservations about being an addict. There's no doubt about that issue, and the greatest gift of all is that I have no reservations about the Program of Narcotics Anonymous. I know that I'm an addict, and I know that I can recover through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. I finally believe in something that I would give my life for. The longer I stay committed to the Fellowship and continue to apply this program in my life the longer I stay alive. What a gift we've been given! How will I ever reciprocate what you people have shared with me? What price is life?

Anonymous
Florida

N.A. Ship of Freedom



The water is dark, deep, cold.

It is my home, I am tugged back and forth, up and down, constantly. For me, there is no sleep, no rest. I must keep treading water, keep my head above. Sometimes, I sink under, always to return to the surface.

One day (or was it night?) a shark came and had a nip, there was nothing I could do. It's part of this life.

I'm not always alone. Often, there's a ship circling, it's bright, white, beautiful. People are on deck, leaning over the railing, reaching out to me.

Sometimes I take one of the hands, just for a while. Only when I'm really tired, really cold, I take a hand, and let myself be pulled along for a time. What a sweet release, a moment of peace. Then I let go.

Treading, moving, going wherever the currents take me.

Sometimes the people on the boat toss me a raft. I've never gotten in all the way. I sort of hang on with one leg, one arm, for a while. Only a while, before I get too relaxed, I let go. Back into the depths.

Finally, I'm under, and I don't want to go back up. I'm finally tired of living a lonely, exhausting, meaningless, life in the depths of the deep sea. I'm going down to stay down.

I hear a whistle blow. It's the ship, I go back up to have a look. Determined to drown soon, yet curious about the people calling to me from the boat.

The people aboard are calling to me. I swim towards them with slow, weak strokes. They throw me a life preserver. I don't understand myself. I'm grabbing on, holding on, with every bit of strength I have. Before I know it, I'm being pulled aboard. Many hands are supporting my weak body. Someone gives me a hot cup of coffee, there's a blanket placed around my shoulders. Besides the physical warmth, there's an emotional warmth I've never felt or imagined before. It's scary. People I don't know are hugging me, telling me how good it is to have me aboard. I'm amazed.

Nobody tells me how stupid it was to let go of the hands all those years. Not a word is said about me being a failure, or better off dead.

No one mentions they've been wasting their time and energy on me all this time. Instead, I am asked to stay, become friends. They tell me about themselves, many are just like me.

For the first time I'm happy to be out of the water. I have no desire to leap overboard. My new friends tell me to think of it one day at a time. That I may decide to jump back tomorrow. That it will be my choice. That we all have the same choice, the same decision.

C.L.
Hawaii

New Insights into the First Step



Diagnosis Comes before a Cure

Why do I feel so different from the other addicts around these tables? Because I did Steps Two and Three before Step One. Or rather, by the grace of God, Steps Two and Three “happened” to me long before I found N.A. Being perfectly unaware that I had an addiction problem or even an addictive personality, I responded to the God of my understanding in the best way I could, following the path he led me

on to my own personal type of Steps Four through Eleven. Naturally, such a spiritual program occasionally led me to cut down or eliminate completely my use of drugs—for a time. I was happy, I was growing, I was improving myself and my relationships. But I didn’t know that I was an addict. And although I knew in a general way that I was powerless over everything, but for the grace and power of God, it never occurred to me that I was powerless over my addiction in such a specific way that it would eventually cause me to lose the very thing that gave me strength and freedom: my relationship with God. Although my addiction continued to progress, as the disease inevitably does, it progressed for a number of years very slowly, thanks to my spiritual program.

And then, cunning, baffling and powerful, it began to happen. My use of alcohol escalated, while my struggle to stay completely away from other drugs met with more frequent but still minor slips. The happy, joyous and free feeling began to disintegrate. Before I lost it all though, I stumbled into N.A. on the arm of a friend who suddenly decided he wanted it and who had witnessed my anguish over those “small slips.” And there I was, hearing about the struggles of the other newcomers with the spiritual aspects of the program, hearing about “bottoms” that I hadn’t experienced in years because my personal spiritual program had maintained me on the edge for so long.

For nine months my attendance was irregular, while I struggled with Step One. But I kept coming back, feeling strange every time. I said I was an addict. Feeling rather like saying, “I used to be an addict.” I read, I talked, I listened. I realized I had never been a whole year completely clean, and I was now approaching a year, without ever feeling a really strong compulsion. It made me feel even less powerless. I wondered if I really needed complete abstinence. So naturally, the compulsion came, finally. I reached out like I had never had to before. My sponsor sat down with me and we went back over my whole life and concentrated on the *progression*. And I could see it.

And then just recently, I received another level of enlightenment in listening to a tape. The speaker told of an addict who had experienced a profound spiritual experience, similar to mine, which changed his whole life, and yet was

unable to stay clean. Why? Because he had not yet met another addict, who eventually brought him the final piece of the puzzle: the admission of absolute powerlessness, which is Step One.

I have been taught that the program offers us three things: the proper identification of our problem, the solution, and the means for reaching the solution. A and B and the line connecting them. The spiritual experience gave that addict, and others before him no doubt, the solution and the connecting line, *but not the starting point*. The disease itself, cunning, baffling and powerful, prevented them from seeing the starting point: that we have an incurable disease. So simple.

I had the solution before. It was even working—sometimes. But oh, those relapses. That feeling of remorse, of confused and puzzled pain. My spiritual awakening was real. My spiritual program was real. How come it failed me? Because, before N.A., I didn't know of the Twelve Steps, numbered in order. Applying the solution was difficult, stressful and confusing because the diagnosis of the problem was confused, uncertain and complicated. Step One makes it all so marvelously simple. Thank you N.A.

M.M.
Canada

Step One Revisited

When I first got into a treatment center, I only thought of my addiction in terms of my drug use. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what. I was actually afraid I wasn't an addict. I thought maybe I was crazy or something. One day in a lecture they listed on the board forty-two symptoms of addiction. I related to forty.

When I finally realized that I was an addict I felt relief. Maybe I was in the right place, and could get some help. I didn't seem to have much trouble quitting drugs, especially since I was in a treatment center where I was pretty much protected from the outside world and all of its problems. When I got out of treatment, though, I felt naked and wanted to use, thinking that would cover me up—cover up my insecurities, loneliness, etc. I did use one more time, and I

didn't like it at all. Nothing had changed. I couldn't feel good clean and I couldn't feel good loaded. Then I found N.A.

Because I thought Step One referred only to my drug use, I thought that as long as I stayed clean I never had to do that step again. That attitude lasted long into my recovery. I haven't used drugs in over seven years, so I assumed that I had done this step for good, and I focused my attention only on the other steps. I kind of knew in the back of my mind that there was more to this than I was willing to look at. I see now that I was missing out on the solid foundation that N.A.'s First Step can give my recovery.

I'm beginning to see how this step applies to my life today—really applies! After talking to someone very close to me I started realizing what this step means to someone who has been around for a while. Whether I use drugs or not, I am powerless over my addiction. If I let things go and don't work the steps and don't do my daily meditation and don't work with newcomers and don't do anything that is suggested in this program, then my addiction starts showing up. It shows up in everything I do and think after a while. I am powerless over it. As a result, my life becomes unmanageable. My self-esteem seems to be the first target that gets hit. I become jealous of others, I judge other people, I live in the negative constantly.

Thank God for these steps, even though they too often are the last place I look for relief. I'm kind of excited about this new way (for me) of looking at the First Step. It is a deeper surrender, and a more solid foundation for the rest of the steps than I have ever had before. That offers hope for me. All the steps do. And every time I work them they seem to have a different, deeper meaning for me. Sometimes I forget that.

I thought that I was no longer powerless over my addiction because I'm not using today and I have these steps that I can use in my life to make it more manageable. Well, I've recently relearned that I am powerless, and that my Higher Power is *power-ful*. Which leads me once again into the Second Step, then the Third, then the Fourth...

T.H.
California



I've heard a lot of talk lately about relapse. I don't know if it's because I'm supposed to be hearing that right now or what. But I decided to share a little of my experience strength and hope on relapses.

First of all, I wish no one had to go through a relapse. I wish that everyone who first came to N.A. got it the first time. If I had stayed in Narcotics Anonymous when I came in and did the things I was supposed to have done, I would have been able to live just that much more of life the way I am today. However, that's not the case. I've been around the Program of Narcotics Anonymous for ten years. I'll have three years clean on February First (I'm a miracle). When I first came to the program I thought I was too young (nineteen). I thought, "For the rest of my life I'm not going to be able to have a drink, take a few pills, etc. My problem was heroin, if I could just stop taking heroin I would be okay."

Anyway, I was in a drug program so I stuck it out awhile. It was fun! I met my second husband, I met a lot of friendly people, I went to meetings to socialize. If I didn't see someone I liked at a meeting, I went to a different one. I didn't work the steps, I wasn't honest, I wasn't willing, etc., etc.

I had a few relapses in about seven or eight years, only for a day or two; I'd take a valium and come back crying at a meeting, because I really did not want to lose the friends I had in N.A., and there was something about those meetings.

Anyway, I finally went out there and really did it. I started out with drinking because I felt I was not an addict *and* alcoholic too (I'm an addict). That is where I think people get confused when they say, "Hi, I'm _____ and I'm an addict and an alcoholic." I was brought up in a treatment program. There were not many N.A. meetings around, and we had to go to a meeting every night, so of course we went to some A.A. meetings. We were told by the treatment staff to identify ourselves as an alcoholic too. Well I knew I was not an alcoholic too. I didn't realize at the time what it really meant to be an **ADDICT!**

In the time my husband and I had been clean we built up a lot. He had his own business, I was an executive secretary, we lived in a three bedroom house with a pool, had three nice cars, and had 1 boy and 1 girl. Everything the perfect family is *supposed* to have.

I ended up staying out there using for a year. Before that year was up, I had lost everything. My husband had even received a \$30,000 settlement, which went immediately towards drugs. We lost everything. On top of all that I was miserable

the whole time I was using. I hated myself, my kids, my husband, everyone in N.A. I was absolutely miserable and afraid of dying. I tried to control everything. I thought, "if I could just get my husband off these drugs, then I could quit."

I ended up getting busted. My husband went back into a treatment program, and I was kicking my habit with my two children in a motel room. I ended up going back to meetings to try to beat my case. It worked last time, why shouldn't it this time.

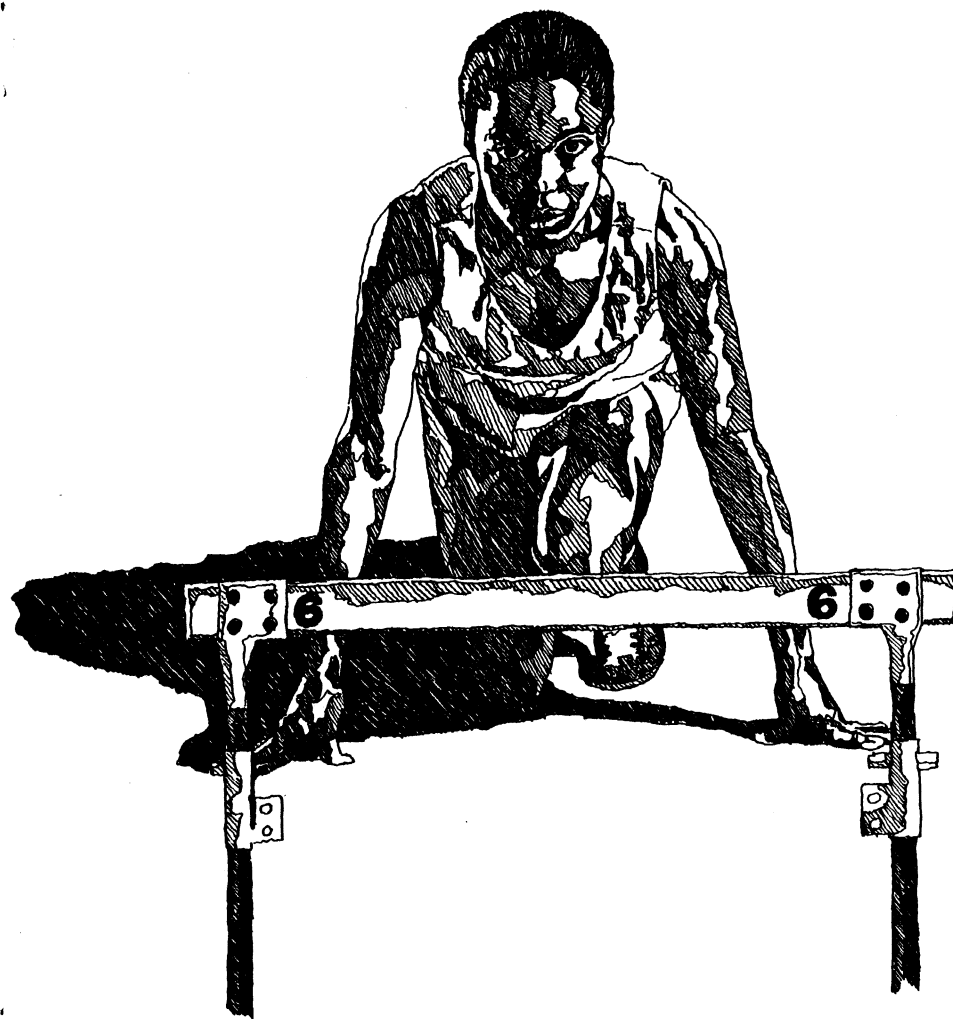
The feelings were horrible! I know those feelings—the humiliation of coming back to meetings. I didn't want those people to know they were right. I didn't want to admit that I couldn't control it, that I truly was an ADDICT. I stayed! I finally surrendered to the fact that yes, I am an addict, and yes, Narcotics Anonymous is where I belong. That feeling of humiliation does pass. And let me tell you, it truly is harder to be out there than to face reality and feelings. Yes, it is a lot of hard work. But, oh the rewards, oh, the self-contentment, and oh yes, the good times.

I had been around so I knew what I had to do to stay. I had to do something different this time. I was not willing to ever go out there again. I believe my Higher Power, for whatever reason, did not want me to die. My Higher Power wanted me to belong to Narcotics Anonymous. But I had to do the footwork.

Here I am in Narcotics Anonymous and with almost three years clean. There's a lot more than I had thought to staying clean. I have to do the footwork. I have to be of service. I have to work the Steps. I have to get a sponsor. I have to abide by the traditions. And, oh yes, the rewards.

C.S.
California

Entirely Ready?



I hadn't been clean more than two weeks when I first heard about Step Six, "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." I thought I was entirely ready

right then. I wanted to be transformed. A few weeks later, I did my Fifth Step and proceeded to Steps Six and Seven. When I woke up the next morning, I still had character defects and I was upset! I called my sponsor. When she stopped laughing, she told me that she didn't think we made any progress on our character defects until they started to give us trouble. That is still true for me today.

By the time I was five months clean, I had established a pattern of writing a Tenth Step, looking at my inventory, getting disgusted with my defects, and asking God to remove them. That pattern has not changed, but my understanding has. I went around for another year or more getting ready or willing to act and think in new ways. I was waiting for God to make me "new." I did not understand why some members seemed to feel that Step Six was so difficult.

Eventually, I realized that what I was doing was not enough. It wasn't enough to be ready to be "new," I had to be ready to stop being "old." Suddenly, Step Six was much more difficult. For me, it was harder to stop thinking and acting in old ways than it was to want to think and act in new ways. I realized that the step did not read, "We were entirely ready to have God give us a new character."

I found that in order to practice my new understanding of Step Six, I had to call on God more during the day. I needed God's help more often if I was really going to let go of my old ways. I continued to try to practice Step Six on a daily basis, and even more was revealed.

I used to worry from time to time about being entirely ready. I felt as if I could do what the other eleven steps asked of me, perhaps only briefly, but I could do it. I knew that I was never at that point with Step Six. At a meeting one night, it dawned on me that the only opinion of my readiness that counted was God's. If you had asked me when I got here if I was entirely ready to stop using, I would have had to have said "no" or "maybe," but I would have been wrong. I was entirely ready to stop using; God knew it and I didn't.

I treat my character defects the same way today. I inventory them, and when I get to that point of feeling like I don't want to be that way anymore, I ask God to help me; then I try to leave the results to Him. I keep doing the footwork, believ-

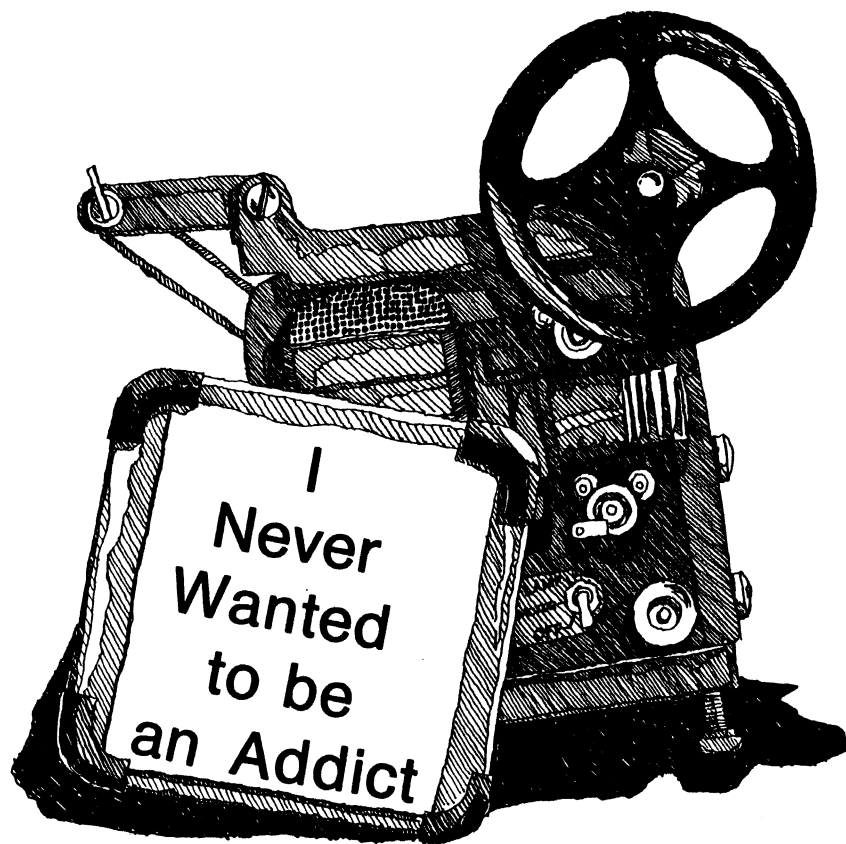
ing that God removes what needs to go, and remain convinced that I do not know what I need nearly as well as He does.

I stayed at that point with Step Six quite comfortably for some time. My actions got me almost okay. I was satisfied with the way I treated others most of the time. My defects of character usually existed only in my head and my guts.

During this last year, I was reading a piece of literature on the Steps which is out to the Fellowship for review. One section discussed persistent trouble with defects and suggested that this led the authors to question the quality of one's basic surrender in the first Three Steps. That section made me furious! Fortunately, today I know that I need to pay attention to anything I react to with anger. Finally, I realized that the addicts who wrote that were correct. First, I had to get my ego out of the way; I had to let go of some false pride about the quality of my surrender. Then, I had to get honest about feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and self-pity among others. Finally, I realized that I was stubbornly insisting on my way—my way of thinking and feeling about myself. God thought I was just fine, but I knew better.

I am a great deal more relaxed about Step Six today. It is still a daily step; I still have to do the footwork. However, I am more secure about God loving me because He's good, not because I'm good. I believe that as long as I am staying clean, going to meetings and doing the footwork, then I am right on schedule. It is more and more all right that it is God's schedule and not mine. I am supposed to be human, not perfect. I have lessons to learn and I am grateful for this opportunity to share some of the lessons I have learned about Step Six.

B.J.
California



When I was in elementary school during the mid-60's and saw the movies depicting drug addicts, I decided I would never take drugs or become a drug addict. These films scared me. During junior high school, recovering addicts visited, telling the students of the dangers of drugs, which further embedded my resolve to not become a drug addict. The older kids who drank beer in the woods told us that if anybody offers drugs to us they would beat them up. The insane contradiction was just planted.

As a child I always felt inferior to everyone. In my eyes, I was the weakest, slowest and worst athlete of anyone I knew. During fifth grade the whole class had a big race and I won. It was a shocking experience to say the least. Yet the feelings of inferiority still stayed. My parents were good and fair, but strict, never letting me stay up late or have longer hair. You name it, as far as I was concerned, I was a nobody.

I couldn't wait for the first time I got drunk. All of my friends had already done it; all the cool people drank regularly, I thought. With my parents always around I thought it never would happen. When I finally got drunk, I was now cool. Getting drunk was now the thing to do on Saturday night. If my friends and I couldn't get drunk, the weekend wasn't a success.

After a few years of weekend drinking it seemed everyone was smoking pot now. This scared me because "pot leads to heroin," people said, which was not the road for me. Pot was okay, but I didn't want to end up doing anything heavier. Of all of my close friends, I was the last person to smoke pot, but when I did it was the best high I could imagine. This was the start of my ten year obsession with marijuana. Right away I started to smoke it all weekend long. It took the place of drinking almost completely. Drinking could only supplement smoking pot.

I went away to college and became a daily user of pot in a matter of weeks. I thought I could get high every night as long as I studied. After six months I stopped studying and failed out. After failing out of my first year at school everyone in my family knew I was a pothead. The pothead himself knew that this was not the way to finish college.

After transferring to another school closer to home, I decided to control my pot use and study. The first semester was great, and getting on the dean's list made my parents very happy. All through college I learned how to party every night and still pass.

In my first job my image was a clean cut guy learning about the engineering business. Then the drug addicts found me. It became a common lunch practice to smoke some joints, drink some beer and go back to work.

Another job came along and I started with the same image. Somehow I always found the party people and stayed with them. Pot smoking became a daily thing after some time. Drinking at lunch was a common, if not daily, occurrence. This went on for about one year. During this time my long-time girl friend asked me why I always had to be high. She didn't like it. My life was getting out of control again. I knew I had a problem. I made the great decision to stop buying pot. The very next day, my biggest party friend at this job told me

of this great shipment of pot which he was getting for only \$112.00 an ounce. I had to get some. My hard steadfast answer was no. Everyday he came into my office asking to go in with him on the deal. After a week and a half my addiction took control and off I went. This was the best pot that I ever had. This was the start of my final run. I really felt like a fool. After saying to myself that I would stop buying, and then going out and buying, I knew I had a serious problem.

My mother knew I was smoking pot like crazy. She told me to either quit smoking and go to meetings or move out. This was the push I needed.

At my first N.A. meeting my future sponsor welcomed me and told me I was the most important person in the room. This made me feel very good. He brought me back to my next meeting too.

I still had reservations about the program, because how could I be an addict only smoking pot and drinking. Someone told me to keep going to meetings and stay clean for ninety days, which sounded good to me.

Acceptance was my problem. I kept analyzing myself, how could I be a drug addict. It wasn't until I read the slogan "Utilize don't Analyze" that I saw a different way. It worked. Someone told me to ask God for something while praying which I did, asking for him to tell me if I was a drug addict or not?

While sharing at a meeting and asking for help, which I had never done before, I cried and realized I was an addict. The rock of denial was dropped, I felt free. I was a drug addict even though I never wanted to be one, but recovery was possible.

Now my life is much better, I am married, I have a job (with no day long parties going on), and I am responsible. The best advice I could give to anyone with any reservations about addiction is to keep going to meetings, That's what I did, and it made all the difference in the world.

C.W.
New York

Acceptance

When I first came to N.A. some 1,200 "Just for Today's" ago, most of the principles I heard discussed might as well have been shared in a foreign language. I was still shaking physically and emotionally; spiritually I was not shaking because my spirit was comatose at best. "Acceptance" was a thing totally alien to my nature.

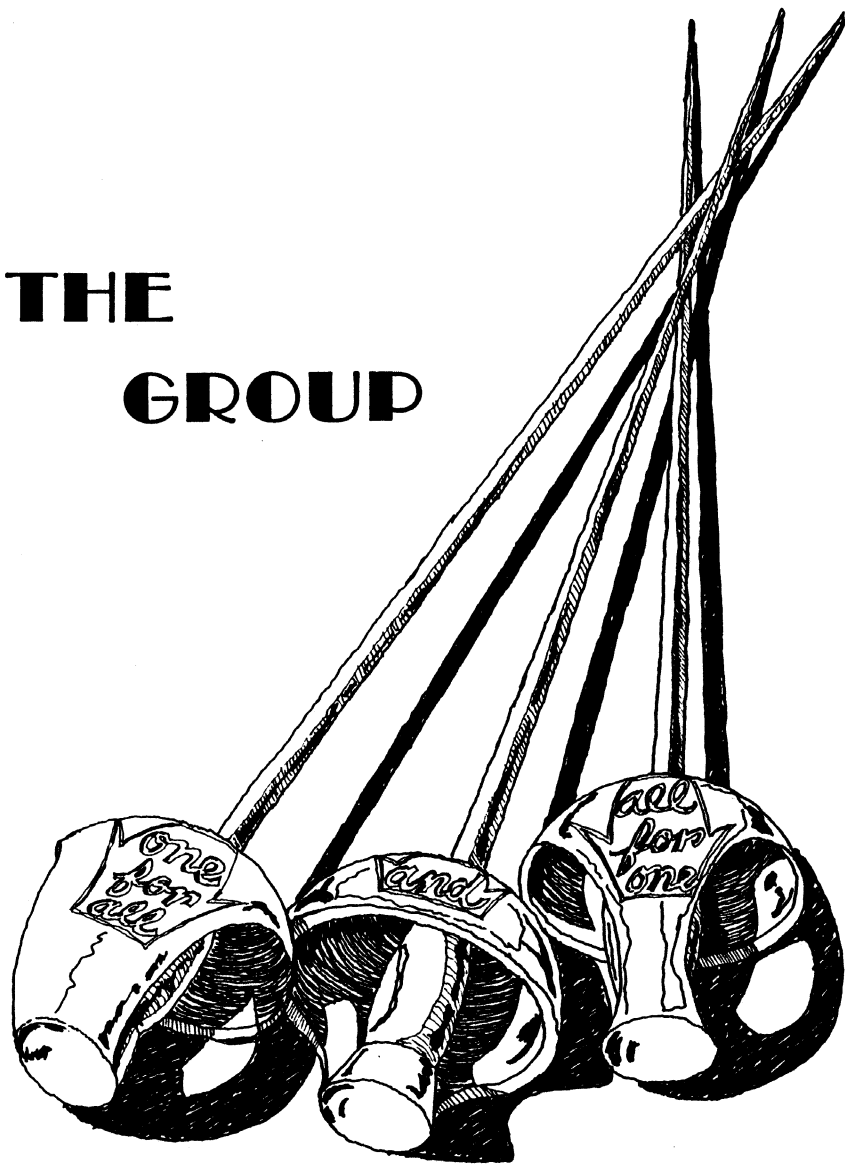
I thought at first that acceptance was connected to serenity, and was therefore a feeling. I thought if I accepted something, that meant that I showed and felt no real concern no matter what it was. I was just supposed to "accept the things I cannot change." Since everything in my life seemed like a crisis during my early recovery, I really accepted nothing. Everything was not only a concern but also a seemingly insurmountable calamity. But I kept maintaining daily—not taking the first drug, going to N.A. meetings, asking for help from N.A. members and H.P., getting involved in setting up meetings, etc. I've recently realized, as our Basic Text says, that "the urgency to take care of things isn't there anymore." So I can face situations in my life without panic and raw fear. N.A. showed me a way to do that, and feel that.

Acceptance can be, and often is, a form of action. For me, I have accepted a situation when it no longer exerts control over my life. When the circumstances do not alter my meeting habits, my prayers, my service, and most of all my abstinence, then I gradually feel the emotional and spiritual acceptance of peace during the storm. But I needed to act first. Then I am going on with my life/recovery as close to usual as possible, instead of trying to isolate or hide. "All feelings will eventually pass."

This form of acceptance in action has another big plus—I can activate it at any time. I do not have to wait for an emotion or feeling to occur that I am powerless to bring forth. I believe that so long as I live this, I do not have to use today. Never again, just for today. Whew! Talk about chills.

T.B.
Pennsylvania

THE GROUP



I am concerned about staying clean myself and maintaining a healthy attitude in my group. The reason I write this is to find some answers to my lack of power. To me, I can't find peace of mind if I don't work with the newcomer or get involved in the group.

My recovery comes from God, but I believe God touches us through our friends. The group is my refuge, that the storms of life can't destroy me. So I need the harmony of the

group to encourage me in troubled times, to talk to my sponsor, work and rework the steps, to improve my relationship with God. I need to get involved with carrying the N.A. message to those who want it.

My understanding of the twenty-four spiritual principles is "one person for all and all for one." Because of our unity, despite ourselves, we get well. The honesty we have with one another is still the most valuable thing a group can have to protect our newcomers. By calling a spade a spade, the power beyond estimate passes all understanding. It is simple—work the program or suffer from the disease and experience all the pain and denial, and nobody can help until you surrender.

The group is where I can go when my own family can't understand like another addict can. When the heat is on, and all hell breaks loose outside, I need to feel welcome and hugged at those N.A. doors to pull me inside where it is safe. Somehow I know it's going to be okay, because I have a sense of belonging to my real family here. The more I tell you about me, your forgiving eyes set me free, so I can go out and meet the world to face the test. Before I leave my special harbor, I look around and I am home at last. The sponsor might be on one side and a newcomer on the other to keep me on the beam to follow the light. Maybe in a moment of clarity He will reveal Himself to you to let you know the search is over you've been found, by His grace, through N.A.

I remember losing vision in the hospital last year so I couldn't read N.A.'s words of hope. So I moved closer to Him and felt the power of your prayers. Then the miracle happened, the group brought me a meeting that showed me how much you cared. Because I am only human I yearn for the touch that addicts have to share; a hug is enough when there are no words.

I had been on morphine around the clock for a month and lost the will to fight back anymore. With the will to live gone and having little hope of kicking the habit again. I knew I was at one of the lowest ebbs in my life. That is when you gave me the desire to live again; you believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. Please don't underestimate the power of hope you shared with me.

And, it all started out so simple, the person who wanted to be a friend when I hadn't one left, who was later to become my sponsor. I owe so much to him, because he brought me to

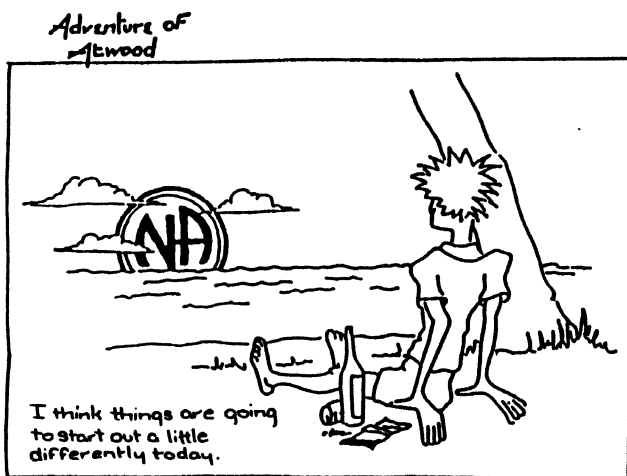
meet you. He was true to his words until his last breath. The last thing he wrote to me was this, "God will sustain you no matter what." In his eyes were contentment and peace and joy and such serenity.

The group has all power because the spirit, in His wisdom and perfect timing, lets us be instruments to him if the channel is open. I pray that my house may be in order by clearing away the wreckage of the past, that I may have something to transmit. Then the magic begins with the team effort to overcome anything. I know all will be well in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

I think I answered my own question. Whenever I get into the sea of despair and wonder if He will leave me to flounder on the beach, then the Fellowship will come in to rescue a lost hopeless guy, just one more time to be found in a meeting.

I feel I have the best home group in the whole world. If you don't, you better find one. My sponsor is the best there is for me because he works the program and gives me direction. I know what my clean date is and it is the most important day in my life. Thanks N.A. for the gift of life, my health, the language of the heart, the essence of love, and for friends who shared their God with me.

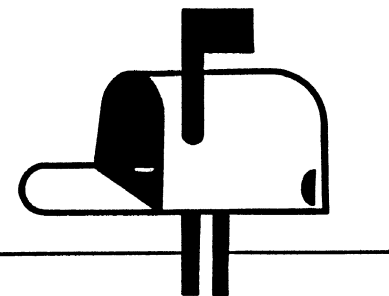
J.C.
Wyoming



From the
NA clean ocean news letter Hawaii

Razz

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

GRATITUDE

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I know that most of the time I forget about gratitude and I'll be on my self-will trip once again, but I forgive myself, since I'm a recovering addict trying to learn how to live clean. One of the things that I've learned is not to compare myself to others. A friend in the program once told me instead to just compare myself to myself. When you compare yourself to others, you always come up short. When I look back to two years ago, I didn't even know N.A. existed. I thank God I was led here.

E.M.
California

Dear N.A. Way,

Just wanted to write you, and tell you about the beautiful N.A. weekend we had here on the North Shore of Oahu last weekend. It was called a "Round-Up" and I was lucky enough to go.

There were clean addicts from all over the mainland (and Hawaii) there. I felt a total blast from the Higher Power that weekend. During the meetings, I felt time stand still. I could have sat there all day listening. I felt so much love from and for everyone out there, even the people I didn't talk to. It was such a blessing to feel so connected, so alive, so free.

The first morning it rained off and on; I never heard anyone complain. Acceptance. That afternoon, after lunch, the beach was full of N.A. I felt like I was on the beach with my (very large) family. I felt safe, and didn't really care if I looked fat in my swimsuit. Just being who I am, and loved, and able to love was all that mattered.

That evening, the main speaker told of a loving God and her experience. My whole being was gratitude. That's all I knew. I could barely talk. I felt like crying for gratitude and joy.

I went over to my tent, where my child lay sleeping. I got inside, and prayed on my knees, for the first time in 10 months clean (truly!). Understanding in my heart what forgiveness is was a turning point for me. For a while, I thought I believed. Now I *know* I believe.

Thanks to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I used to hear people say "I love you all" and think, yeah, sure (you don't even know me!). Now I feel like saying:

I love you all!

Aloha Nui Loa
C.L.
Hawaii

Dear N.A. Way,

Well today, for me, has been a day of sheer magic. I booked a holiday in the USA. I have always wanted to see your beautiful country, and I'm certainly looking forward to meeting so many of you friendly addicts that I've been writing to. I'm also looking forward to meeting new friends that I have never met. I'm arriving in New York on June 2, 1986 and am hitchhiking across to California and getting to as many states and meetings as possible, if any of you see a wee fair hair (streaks) granny tramping the roads, stop, it could be me. I'll have a foreign scottish accent. I know that this trip is only possible because I'm clean today. Thanks to my God and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Our Scottish first quarterly magazine came out this week and we had our third area meeting. A day at a time, our N.A. is opening in another town very soon. That will be seven. And last year at this time Scotland only had one meeting. That's a real miracle. I prayed so often that another addict would come, and now I can go to another three meetings within one hour's drive. I'm really so grateful to you all and the Loners over there who wrote to me, and the to all addicts

over here who helped keep me happily content and clean. Without you all I would probably be dead.

J.R.
Scotland

Dear N.A. Way,

THE BEST THING

I have often wanted to write to the N.A. Way and share what has been given me. Soon after having this thought (feeling), I then think "I have nothing to share that anybody else would want, and it probably wouldn't get printed anyway." I have since seen that I have looked at myself and my recovery as "not quite good enough," until someone else helped me take a look through *their* eyes.

What I have today is not only freedom from drugs, but a program, a design for living that I couldn't even begin to comprehend while still using. A chance to be the best person I've ever been. This is truly the best thing that has *ever* happened to me. I am starting to see how important sharing *all* my thoughts and feelings really is.

I have also started to see how important it is to share with people who are like me, and share this common problem. With this in mind, I've decided to start an N.A. meeting here in my town, so that I can share (and be shared with) by others.

Thank you N.A. and all recovering addicts everywhere for being there when I need you; for being the BEST THING that can happen!

J.M.
California

COMIN' UP

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

CANADA: May 3-4; 2nd French Conv; Info: District 04, Box 31, Grand-Mere P. Quebec, Canada G9T 5K7; (819) Ginette 537-9448; John 537-6429:

2) Jun 27-29; BCNAR Recovery in Motion; Cloverdale Fairgrounds, 6050 176 St., Cloverdale, B.C.; FVASC; 1176 Johnston, White Rock, B.C. V4B 3Y6

COLORADO: Jul 4-6; WSVC 3, Stouffers Concourse Hotel, Denver, Box 816, Boulder 80306: (303) Janice 388-4777; Pam 893-0580; John 642-3273; Gary 830-2640

FLORIDA: Jul 3-6; FRCNA V; FRCNA V, Box 14738, Orlando, FL 32857-4738; (305) Richard 677-7426; Karen 281-7307; Tim or Lisa 830-0140

ILLINOIS: May 2-4; Little Egypt Area 2nd Campout; Campout, Route 1, Box 36, Nashville, IL 62263; (618) Alicia 548-5785; Stan 478-5749; Peggy 533-0450

LONDON: Aug 28-31; World Convention-16, Wembley/Conference Center; Registration in the U.S.A., Vida (818) 780-3951, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409; Registration outside U.S.A., P.O. Box 667, London, England NW8-7JW

MAINE: Sep 12-14; We're A Miracle III; ASC of Maine, PO Box 5309, Portland ME 04104; (207) Bruce C. 772-4558; Lisa D. 773-5492

MICHIGAN: Jul 3-6; RCNA of Michigan; Freedom II; Troy Hilton 1455 Stephenson Hwy; MDCC, PO Box 224, Royal Oak, MI 48068; (313) MSO 544-2010; Sharon 777-8089

MINNESOTA: Jun 20-22; Upper Midwest RCNA III; Holiday Inn, 1313 Nicollet Mall, Downtown Minneapolis; (612) Geno 827-4063 Karen 558-7959 Wayne 561-5748

MISSOURI: Jun 6-8; SMRCNA-I; Henry VIII Hotel, 4690 N. Lindbergh, St. Louis, MO 63044; Show Me Region Conv. Comm., Box 596, St. Charles, MO 63302

NEBRASKA: May 23-26; 6th Annl NA Run For Fun, Campout; Alexandria State Rec Area, Alexandria, NE; (402) Mike 475-8985 Gary 475-4853

NEW JERSEY: May 9-11; 1st Unity Weekend; The Berkley Carteret, Sunset and Ocean, Asbury Park; (201) Kandi 988-9451; Gary B. 774-4846; Bob H. 742-3566

NEW YORK: Jun 27-29; 1st Annl Northern New York RCNA; Wells College Campus, Aurora, NY; Mel (315) 548-3610; Ilga (607) 273-8884

2) Jun 13-15; 2nd NYRC Freedom II; Stevensville Country Club, Swan Lake, NY; (718) Susanne 646-4433, Greg 435-0156, Barry 238-3492

OHIO: May 23-25; ORCNA IV Conv; Hollenden House, E. Superior; ORCNA IV, P.O. Box 29517, Cleveland, Ohio 44129; (216) Joe 671-3316 Tommy 352-2042

2) Jul 18-20; 2nd Annual Columbiana County Camp-Vention; 340 S. Fairfield Ave. Apt. A1, Columbiana, OH 44408; (216) Jo 482-3292; Shawn 385-7508

PENNSYLVANIA: Jun 20-22; 7th East Coast Convention; Bloomsburg Univ ; 7th ECCNA, Box 211, Taylor, PA 18517; (717) Ron 457-0587; Rich B. 457-9751

WASHINGTON: Oct 24-26; 9th Annual Picnic; Everett Pacific Hotel; Everett WA; PNWCNA #9, P.O. Box 5393, Everett, WA 98201; (206) Mike S. 672-6848; Russ F. 259-4904

2) Jun 13-15; 1st Young Peoples Convention; Sea Tac Red Lion Inn, 18740 Pac. Hwy S., Seattle, WA. 98188; (206) Mark E. 878-8695; Kay L. 838-4784

WEST VIRGINIA: May 9-11; West Virginia Conv for N.A. III; Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley; (304) Paul 342-7506, Danny 925-7088, Phil 292-0896

WISCONSIN: Oct 24-26; 3rd Wisconsin Conv; WSNAC III, P.O. Box 3305, Madison, WI 53704; (608) 258-1747 (phoneline)

2) Aug 1-3; Mid-Coast Regional Conv II; Sheraton Manitowoc; Mid-Coast Reg Conv Com, PO Box 347, Manitowoc, WI; (414) Kathy C 921-4044; Bill L 233-6037

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE: April 28/May 2; Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys; Registration: Vida (818) 780-3951, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409



*THE INTERNATIONAL
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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

- 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
- 2 For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
- 3 The only requirement for N.A. membership is a desire to stop using.
- 4 Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.
- 5 Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
- 6 An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7 Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8 Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9 N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10 N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11 Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
- 12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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